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AUTHOR Wheelan, Belle S.
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ABSTRACT

National data show that, while more money is being spent on education and legislation has been written to guarantee equal access to the educational process, the nation is still losing black males to crime and joblessness. Teachers must have high expectations for young black males, and they must avoid the labeling and stereotyping that make these young men think they have no place in the academic world. The traditional models of education in the United States seem to be very inefficient with black male children. Afrocentric curricula designed to broaden traditional curricula may be more effective. An Afrocentric curriculum can be developed so as to legitimize and explore African American culture while teaching about European and other cultures. Several alternative approaches have been suggested to make schools more effective for young African American males. Among them is the idea of single sex elementary schools for boys. The first Virginia African American Summit of civic, religious, professional, and political leaders put together a five-point plan to focus on the needs of African American children. A further effort is the planned First Annual Black Male Development Conference. Such initiatives help empower the black parent to take responsibility for shaping the educational system. There is a 56-item list of references. (SLD)

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MAKING PUBLIC EDUCATION WORK

FOR

BLACK MALES

Prepared for:

Second National Conference
on
Preventing and Treating Alcohol
and
Other Drug Abuse, HIV Infection,
and
AIDS in Black Communities

From Advocacy to Action

by:

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.

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Introduction

Recent estimates indicate that by the year 2020, the majority of school age children will be minorities (Hodgkinson, 1985). If the system of public education continues it's success rate, black students will continue to hold the record for drop-out rates, low academic achievement, and lower college attendance rates than high school graduation rates. In order to turn around the negative experience black children report in schools, a steadfast commitment on the part of parents, school officials, churches, community groups, and state and federal legislators will be needed.

If one assumes that the purpose of public education is to provide a place for citizens to receive the training (academic and/or vocational) necessary to become productive, working, tax paying members of our society, then we know that this process has not always been available to people of African-American heritage. On the other hand, schooling, or the process of learning and surviving as a result of that learning, has. While the above definitions of education and schooling are my own, I do believe that further reading will convince you that both are valid descriptions of two distinctly unique processes that have served African-Americans well.

The question of how to educate "Negroes" has plagued the great forefathers of this country since our arrival on the shores of this great land. Prior to the insurrection of 1800, led by the slave

Gabriel Prosser, formal educational training was the best kept secret in the country. Since the early days of the colonies, it has been believed that education and slavery were a lethal combination, as this might cause an uprising among the people who would then realize that slavery was indeed inappropriate. In spite of the efforts to minimize the availability of education to slaves generally, however, a few organizations sought to provide some formal training for slaves.

Beginning with educating slaves to the idea of Christianity, promulgated through the Puritans, John Eliot, Colton Matthew, Nathaniel Pigott, William Penn, and Paul Cuffee, up to the Philadelphia Abolition Society whose members included Noah Webster, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine, a handful of brave and caring "whites of good will" dared to work to abolish slavery and to encourage the education of people of all colors (Low and Cliff, p.332). While not a popular notion with all slave owners, many dared to teach one or two of their slaves to read and write.

Subsequent to the American Revolution, northern blacks enjoyed the benefit of the educational process in both public and private institutions. According to Low and Cliff (1981):

> "New Jersey began educating black children in 1777. In addition, Quakers and other humanitarian groups taught black children privately, and Quaker philanthropist Anthony Benezet provided funds to enlarge the Quaker program begun with the school session of 1774. In 1787 a school for Afro-Americans was built in Philadelphia, and by 1797 at least seven schools had been established" (p. 333).

In the south, significant changes did not occur until during Reconstruction (1870's). Legislation was passed in Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Florida, and Louisiana that provided for "separate but equal" education for the Afro-American. Since the south had, historically, been opposed to education at tax payers expense, for such legislation to occur at all was a major milestone. It did not matter whether the children were black or white, the issue was how to pay for their education.

Familiarity with such legal cases as Plessy vs Ferguson in 1896, through Brown vs the Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas in 1954 is prevalent. Other cases involving integration of facilities, busing, etc. have more often than not been deliberated in courts in the south. While it has taken nearly three decades for desegregation to occur in schools, in Virginia, the issue of neighborhood schools has reared its head again in 1991. Yet, another step backwards for our children.

Other examples of educational opportunities were prevalent as early as the 1800's. It was not until 1849, when the City of Boston appeared before the Massachusetts Supreme Court on behalf of a little black girl who had been barred from attending a white school, that such contemporary issues as neighborhood schools, busing for racial balance, funding for public and private schools and facilities became issues. Numerous court cases have been filed on behalf of black students that have resulted in legal mandates to end segregated schools, forced busing for racial equality, and

admittance into the sacred ivy covered walls of America's most prestigious universities. Yet, in 1991, these and other battles surrounding the right of all Americans to a quality public education are still being fought.

Schooling, on the other hand, has been and continues to be a legitimate, albeit informal, means by which young black people learn. Playing the dozens, hustling, gang affiliation, woofing, slang, etc. are time proven strategies implored by blacks to survive, and often provide themselves with food, clothing, and shelter---those basic "necessities" to which every human being is entitled. This form of education is, unfortunately, becoming an option for more and more of our black youth today. Isn't it ironic that over three hundred years ago, these same strategies were the **only** ones available to people of African decent and today, in many cities across the country, is now becoming the educational method of **choice**.

As a result of severe poverty, teenage pregnancies, and an abundance of single-parent families where the parent is working long hours and has little time for quality interaction with their children, today's black youth are having to raise themselves. That means, quality time with peers (kids raising kids) at each others homes or in the streets with little or no adult supervision. The results we are seeing translate into drug experimentation and subsequent abuse, gang fights and resulting murders, and a drop-out rate that rivals the national debt.

Academic Performance of Black Males

In 1983, fewer than 4,200 black college bound high-school graduates, out of 75,400, had grade point averages of 3.75 (B+) or better, compared to 7,858 out of 36,048 Asians, and 115,722 out of 701,345 white students, (Williams, W., 1989). That means that 5.5% of black college bound seniors earned B+ averages, compared to 22% for Asians and 16.5% for whites. While the percentage of black high school graduates is climbing and the drop-out rate declining, fewer of these young black minds are finding their way to institutions of higher education.

A 1990 American Council on Education (ACE) study showed that Blacks are graduating from high schools and, as a group, blacks are doing better on college entrance exams; however, fewer blacks are going to college (Wingert, 1990). The report further states that:

> *the percentage of low income black high-school graduates attending college dropped from 40% to 30% from 1976 to 1988;
>
> *enrollment of black middle class graduates dropped from 54% in 1976 to 36% in 1988; and
>
> *enrollment of middle income black men dropped from 53% to 28% from 1976 to 1988 (p. 75).

The figures for poor blacks are worse.

Why is this happening? The primary reason is money. In the 1970's, middle income blacks who were in the lower range of middle income could qualify for federal grants; however, this was not so in the 80's. Additionally, many colleges and universities returned to tighter admissions standards for their applicants, thereby,

eliminating large numbers of black students. Finally, retention efforts have failed to keep black students in school. It seems as though the theory followed by the institutions is 'we let you in, now it's up to you to succeed.'

During the 60's and 70's, there was also a substantial increase in the number of blacks moving into high-status occupations and political positions. This was a direct result of colleges and universities revamping their admissions policies to conform to federal legislation to integrate. During this same time, the number of black high school graduates began to climb. There seemed to be a reason to further one's education--for a good job. However, during the years of the Reagan administration, a resurgence of political conservatism occurred. The national leadership that fostered opportunity for all that had been present in the 60's and 70's disappeared. The onus was thrown upon the states to provide funding for many of the programs that had previously been supported with federal dollars. For example, Head Start programs that had been instituted in areas where children had traditionally been deprived of parental involvement in the learning process, early childhood education and formal training were no longer provided.

In 1989, the National Research Council released a report on the changing status of black Americans since 1940 entitled "A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society." It indicated that while the status of black Americans on the <u>average</u> had improved,

1/3 of the black population, which included nearly half of all black children, still lived in poverty. It further stated that assuming no significant policy changes developed in the near future that:

> *the rate of increase of the black middle class is likely to decline,
>
> *approximately 1/3 of the black population will continue to be poor,
>
> *the relative employment and earnings status of black men, now declining, is likely to deteriorate,
>
> *drugs and crime, teenage parenthood, poor education, and joblessness will maintain their grip on large numbers of poor and near-poor blacks,
>
> *high rates of residential segregation between blacks and whites will continue, and
>
> *the U.S. faces the continued great inequality between whites and blacks and a continuing division of social status within the black population (Futurist, 1990, p. 54-55).

The U.S. Department of Education reports that nearly 20 percent of all African-American males drop out of high school. Additionally, "black boys score lower than any other group of youngsters on standardized tests....are disproportionatley misclassified and placed in classes for the mentally retarded or are tracted into slow-learning classes more often and with more consequences than for any other group of children" (Dent, 1989). These factors are believed to be the prime reason why black men end up in jail or dead, go to college, or earn a decent living. Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu believes, "Every black male child who is diagnosed

and placed in special education is a prime candidate to deal drugs," (Dent, 1989).

In summary, data show that while more money is being poured into educational systems across the country, and legislation has been mandated to guarantee equal access to the educational process, we are still losing black males to crime and joblesness. Opening doors is not enough. We must continue to provide opportunity, guidance, and finances once they have entered, assist them in finding success while they are in school, and get them jobs when they have graduated.

Teacher Expectations of Black Males

Numerous studies have shown that a student's academic performance often parallels teacher expectations. When teachers encourage students, students learn, and when teachers don't think students can learn, they don't. Often, teachers make judgements on very mundane criteria such as family background, the way a child dresses or, unfortunately, skin color. The impact of these expectations is manifested in poor academic performance which often yields placement in special education classes. Unfortunately, African-American males are found to be there more than twice as often as non-black males.

Many of our classrooms today are battle zones between students and teachers. These battles are, more often than not, fought between male students and teachers. Interestingly enough, though

macho behavior is considered a preferential characteristic among males in America; however, when such behavior is expressed by black male youth, they are labeled delinquent or deviant and are subject to severe discipline. If a classroom teacher's expectations of such behavior in young black males is validated, their own worst fears have then been realized. Their only resort, in many instances, seems to be such extreme forms of discipline as suspension or expulsion. According to Dent (1989), African-American males are twice as likely to receive corporal punishment and to be suspended as their white counterparts. He suggests that African-American males' perception of their high rate of punishment is that they have no place in the academic world.

The Traditional Models of Education

The traditional educational models of teacher lectures, children respond seems to be extremely inefficient in working with black male children. Boys are generally more active than girls, have shorter attention spans, and higher energy levels than girls. These behaviors, coupled with an academic curriculum that is often seen as totally irrelevant to their daily lives, may well be the explanation behind the high drop-out rates experienced by our black males today.

J.P. Comer and his colleagues at Yale University's Child Study Center conducted a study at two inner-city schools in New Haven, Connecticut in 1968. They worked with teachers and administrators

to foster their ideas about learning. Teachers were encouraged to believe that the children could learn and to treat them with respect. They concluded that "the way to academic achievement is to promote psychological development in students, which encourage bonding to the school," (Comer, 1988). At the end of their study, four years later, the school had raised its rating from 25 out of 33 schools in the district to number three!

Comer further explains that by the age of eight, kids begin to recognize how other families differ from their own in income, education, and sometimes race and style. Many are unable to achieve in school and subsequently see academic success as unattainable. They, therefore, decide that school is unimportant. With education no longer an option, they turn to other ways to seek a sense of adequacy, belonging, and self-affirmation in non-mainstream groups that do not value academic achievement, i.e. drop-out, teen pregnancy, drug abuse and crime. Other educators today believe that because of the lack of historical facts describing the contributions blacks have made to American history, many children, black and white, male and female have a distorted view of black people. Additionally, since most elementary school teachers are female, thereby providing few male role models, theorists are beginning to support the notion of special schools for black males, and curricula replete with an Afrocentric theme.

Winkler (1991) defines Afrocentrism as the heritage and accomplishments of Black people. Proponents of an Afrocentric

curriculum believe that by including facts about African-Americans into the daily curricula, minorities are able to have their story told. Critics claim that these programs sometimes violate historical accuracy with overblown claims, such as that most philosophy and civilization originated in Africa, and that they breed racial divisiveness with depiction of whites as oppressors. One such critic is Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a Pulitzer Prize winning historian who says, "...Afrocentrism in the schools is a symptom of a growing fragmentation that is threatening our society," (Winkler, 1991).

James Turner (1971) believes that traditional American education is nothing more than "white studies" and that it does nothing but teach children, black and white, to accept and value the morals and beliefs of white society. He says:

> "White studies is a system of intellectual legitimacy which defines the activities and experiences of white western people as the universal yardstick of human existence. Black studies challenges this assumption and asserts that white is not now, nor has it ever been either intrinsically right or complete. White students are educated to be rulers and makers of their society. Blacks are taught to synthesize the experience and memorize the conclusions of another people. The consequence of such education is that many blacks, if not most, are inclined to confuse the interest of our people with that of our opposer; creating a situation where we accept the white people's definitions of the problems they cause for us and the situation's they deem acceptable for Black people" (p. 12).

Hale-Benson (1982) further defends Turner by saying that while Black studies also includes the historical contributions of African-Americans, it is the story of a struggle. By telling this

story, Blacks are able to "identify oppression in its various forms and disguise it to formulate a strategy for struggling against it" (p. 156). How does this alternative emphasis translate into an educational curriculum?

Impact of An Afrocentric Model

Afrocentric curricula are designed to broaden the traditional curricula to include the study and legitimacy of African-American culture while assimilating the skills one needs to survive in mainstream America. Parents today, who were children of the 60's struggle, want their children to learn about the experiences of their ancestors along with arithmetic problems, scientific experiments, social studies, etc. They want their children to be proud of their African-American identity, develop a positive frame of reference and self-concept, and possess a dedication to furthering the commitment of their heritage.

An Afrocentric curriculum can be developed so as to legitimize and explore African-American culture while teaching about Euro-American and other cultures at the same time. Hale-Benson (1982) identifies four basic concepts that should be emphasized in this "combined" model:

1) language/communication skills-this area includes speaking, listening, labeling, storytelling, chanting, imitating, and reciting.

2) mathematical concepts-assists students in using daily skills (batting averages, etc.) in classroom settings.

3) positive self-concept and positive attitude about learning

> and school-this affective concept includes activities that consciously deal with black children's ideas about themselves and its impact on academic performance, that is, "I like myself and, I can do this work."
>
> 4)African-American studies-this includes concepts related to the culture, cosmology, history, and perspective of Africans that will yield a greater knowledge of their ancestors as well as increased pride in their racial heritage (pp. 161-163).

She further discusses features of this model, specific teaching strategies, equipment and materials, the role of the parents and teachers, the role of discipline, and the subsequent impact on Black males. Additionally, she points out that within traditional Euro-American classrooms, females, both black and white, adjust better to female headed and oriented classes. Males have a more difficult time "settling down."

Alternate Educational Strategies

Many other theorists have spoken out recently on the issue of the impact of public education as Black males. Their theories are as varied as their own backgrounds. Strickland (1989) suggests that in order for our black children to survive the educational process, "we must recapture our history for ourselves and our young people, and then, standing on that history, we must develop new strategies of struggle adequate to the challenges that now confront us" (p. 112). His list of suggestions to accomplish this includes:

> *Reading Malcolm X-this will give our young men an intellectual understanding of the possibilities of overcoming their circumstances.

*Communicate-we should talk to each other, develop a consensus as to what the solutions to our problems are, and communicate them to one another.

*Set the agenda-we must learn to think and try to understand where we fit in the scheme of things.

Dr. Alvin Poussiant, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School believes that, "the critical ingredient in self-esteem and also in self-discipline and independence is helping your child develop a sense of mastery over himself and his environment," (Fitzgerald, 1986).

Many schools have recently been highlighted as model schools that meet the needs of black students (male and female) while yielding academically successful graduates. At Detroit's Renaissance High School, 98% of the graduates go to college (Turner, 1988). In Los Angeles at Audubon Junior High, Gae McCallum designed a program that calls for students to sign a contract outlining what is expected regarding their conduct, grooming, and academic performance. Parents must sign the contract also (Collier, 1988).

George McKenna, principal of George Washington Preparatory High School in Los Angeles, California, promotes the idea of determining who will ultimately be responsible for breaking the "tiered-fault" cycle of the high school blaming the middle school, which blames the elementary school, which blames the parents, who blame the kids for being "incapable of learning" (1988). He says;

"the solution to our problem lies in first having an infallible <u>belief</u> that education is our salvation;

> secondly, in identifying those behaviors that must be adopted by public schools; and third, for our civic leaders to create an effective monitoring process that holds the educational system accountable in measurable, tangible ways. Educational institutions must assume the responsibility for creating and implementing programs that will address the major problems of society ultimately caused by a miseducated populace," (p. 124).

He goes on to state that in order to save our children and ourselves we must require schools to do the following:

*Teach skills within the subject area to all students. The skills of reading, writing, thinking, speaking, listening, studying, and test taking can and must be taught daily by <u>every</u> teacher, regardless of subject field.

*Develop and implement at all grade levels a "non-violent" curriculum and instructional programs that teach peace, positive and non-violent strategies for conflict resolution at school, at home, and within self.

*Provide a "Parent-Community Support System" within each school, which <u>hires</u> parents who live within the school community area and houses them on campus. Their primary function would be to generate parental involvement with the physical presence of parents on campus while school is in session.

*Provide panel education workshops run by other parents for the benefit of parents whose children are educationally "at risk."

*Develop peer counseling programs for teen-age students in every junior and senior high-school in order to provide positive support, peer assistance and role models for students who are most susceptible to negative peer pressure.

*Operate Saturday tutorial programs on every school campus run by volunteers from churches, Greek-letter organizations, professional organizations, and other students and dedicated individuals.

*Establish mandatory daily homework, dress codes for students, daily home contacts for absent students, closed campuses, extended library hours, college prep courses for all students, elimination of "tracking" either students or teachers, (i.e., the practice of permitting the model teachers to teach only the model students), and collegial support systems for teachers at each school site.

*Provide a nurturing, loving and caring atmosphere within each school and classroom, so that students are not perceived as adversaries or victims, but as the most precious and important persons in the school.

*A concerted, visible, and measurable effort to rescue the Black male students, beginning with the third grade and continuing through high school. The use of positive role models from the community, peer support, and academic achievement rewards are essential ingredients in establishing a "brotherhood" among the young men. The future of the Black family depends on our ability to rescue the Black male," (McKenna, 1988).

A new concept in the education of black males has emerged in the last few years and has created quite a bit of consternation among educators, both black and white. In Miami, Florida, an elementary school for black boys was opened and after one year, attendance rates rose 6%, test scores jumped 6-9%, and a noticeable decrease in hostility was reported (Tiff, 1990). However, after one year, the U.S. Department of Education closed the school saying that it was violating the civil rights laws to have an all black school only for boys.

A similar situation is being tried in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In the fall of 1990, a middle school and an elementary school were to be opened for black boys. The schools were being designed to "create a climate and culture that says to all children, particularly black boys, that you're OK," reports one of the school board members and the mother of a 16 year old son. The lesson plans will emphasize black achievement.

Traditionally, black boys have had few positive role models in school, and studies have shown that they generally get lower grades

and receive less academic support than black females or whites. Proponents of the schools, which are called African- American Impression Schools, believe this type of situation is their only hope. Critics of the program believe that it is a throw back to separate but equal education or officially sanctioned segregation.

Similar programs are cropping up across the country. Spencer Holland, director of the Center for Educating African-American males at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, has organized a program that trains black male volunteers to serve as teaching assistants or mentors in four elementary schools in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland (Newsweek, Oct. 90).

Activities in the Commonwealth of Virginia

In January 1990, a group of civic, business, religious, professional, and political leaders across the Commonwealth of Virginia met to endorse and plan the first Virginia African-American Summit. Held on the campus of Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia, their summit put together a five-point plan that focused on the African-American family, drugs and the administration of justice, economic development, education, political empowerment, and the legislative process.

The purpose of the summit was to 1)develop a statewide African-American agenda of consensus for the 90's and beyond; 2)to address the inequities that continue to exist in the African-American community, and 3)to provide a document, "Report to the

People," which gives the goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics recommended to the summit.

The goal of the education agenda is to ensure that African-American children receive a quality education designed to allow each child to maximize his/her potential for future success.

The objectives developed to achieve this goal include:

I. Increase opportunities for parenting education.

II. Increased patron involvement in the total educational system to include administrative and programmatic aspects of local school and school division decisions.

III. Increased out-of-school educational and enrichment experience for African-American children.

IV. Increased Afro-centric perspectives in educational programs and curriculum.

V. Increased multi-cultural sensitivity among school staff.

VI. Increased number of African-Americans entering and completing post-secondary education. Provide additional activities convenient to African-American communities or post-secondary opportunities.

VII. Increased number of African-American role models in the schools (p. 13)

It seems apparent, therefore, that African-Americans have come full circle. That is, from depending on ourselves to provide education/schooling to ourselves back to recapturing our children's education. Curricula enriched, by an African-American flavor, are now being demanded for the current generation of budding leaders. We have recognized the need to tell our story to our children so the message and struggle can continue to be spread and fought.

In Portsmouth, Virginia, a group of 60 black leaders, comprised mostly of black men, has organized to plan the First Annual Black Male Development Conference. This one-day event will be directed toward 200 young black men between the ages of 13 and 18 years old. Activities include the following:

*Historical perspective of contributions made by black men.

*Breakout sessions concerning budgeting, finance, self-concept, career search, relationships,?

*Luncheon/Fashion Show that will focus on looking well groomed on a limited budget.

*Roundtable sessions with 50 black men employed in occupations ranging from sanitation engineers (trash collectors) to judges.

At the end of the day, the young men will be matched with one of the organizers who will then serve as a mentor until the next conference is held in 1992.

The organizers are respected leaders in the Portsmouth, Chesapeake, and Suffolk communities with high visibility positions, who themselves grew up in those communities or have lived there for 10 or more years.

Recommendations

If we are to believe the facts we read about young black men, we can only see failure and doom for the next generation of black men. Crack cocaine, violent crimes, and the belief that one must constantly exhibit his manhood no matter the challenge are merely symptoms of a larger problem, that of poverty and hopelessness.

One out of every four black children born lives in or below the poverty level, or they're being raised by single black women.

While violence is creating a situation where fewer black men are available to raise their children (they're either dead or in jail), black women have the responsibility of raising a generation of male children alone. The first action that must be taken to change this seems to rest with the black women empowering themselves to handle this situation.

In so doing, she must first realize that she is not alone, that other parents (mothers) are also having to deal with the same factors in today's society. They **must** become involved in what children are learning in school. If they are unable to go to the school to communicate with the teachers, the teachers will have to go to them. If that won't happen because the teachers are afraid to go in some neighborhoods, the churches within the community must open their doors and provide a place for such communication to occur.

We must return to the concept of "community." That is why, in the Portsmouth, Virginia project, Tidewater Community College is providing the impetus for the project. Other communities must do the same.

Our public school system must take a risk and change its modes of teaching. It never ceases to amaze me how two and three year old children can quote any rap song on the radio, can memorize series of things they want to memorize, yet are labeled slow

learners or mentally retarded because once they go to school they are relegated to mundane activities such as sitting still, copying what's on the board, and doing what they're told. What a way to stifle learning!

We must rekindle the sense of taking responsibility for ourselves and our possessions and not depending on others or the material things in our lives to determine our self-worth. Two hundred dollar sneakers, $80 jeans (with holes in them), etc. do not a great mind make.

We must help our children develop <u>appropriate</u> values and to value appropriate things. This includes taking responsibility for the children we bring into this world. For until this happens, we will continue to create generations of African-Americans who's male members are lost.

Gibbs (1988) has identified a series of recommendations to be implemented at the local, state, and federal levels that would improve conditions in the schools so that "the continuing waste of human potential and the frequent imposition of negative sanctions against students who desperately need to be recognized in positive ways" can be halted (p. 88) They identify the role that each must play to ensure quality educational opportunity for our young black children. They are listed below:

<u>Local/School Level</u>

1) Recruit and select competent, caring, confident, and creative teachers and school sites and district level administrators.

2) Implement heterogeneous ability grouping (except in the cases of severe handicapping conditions).

3) Ensure that teachers, administrators, and school staff are cognizant of the importance of expectations on student achievement.

4) Value school academic performance.

5) Implement early childhood education programs.

6) Use resources from the business community.

7) Develop and use a resource bank of role models.

8) Improve parental involvement in the schools and their knowledge of postsecondary educational requirements.

State Level (Through policies and funding):

1) Ensure that teachers, administrators, and school staff are cognizant of the importance of expectations on student achievement.

2) Implement early childhood education programs.

3) Improve parental involvement in schools and their educational awareness. This can be done by requiring parents to get involved in decision making or funds will be withheld.

Federal level (Through policies and funding):

1) Student financial assistance for postsecondary educational opportunities.

2) Provide funding for demonstration projects.

3) Provide funding for establishing pre-school and early school year programs.

While hope has not died, it is getting dimmer. We must rekindle that glow in our children. They must want to keep the flame burning.

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